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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 YEREVAN 000343

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TAGS: [ETTC](#) [PREL](#) [ENRG](#) [EINV](#) [EPET](#) [MNUC](#) [IAEA](#) [IR](#) [AM](#)
SUBJECT: FM OSKANIAN BRIEFS US ON IRANIAN PRESIDENT
AHMADINEJAD VISIT

REF: A. A) YEREVAN 339

- [B](#). B) YEREVAN 331
- [C](#). C) YEREVAN 328
- [D](#). D) YEREVAN 323
- [E](#). E) STATE 32666

Classified By: CDA A.F. Godfrey, reasons 1.4 (b,d)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: FM Oskanian called in CDA to provide a readout of the Iran-Armenia pipeline opening, and the presidents' bilateral meeting on the margins. Oskanian said that the GOAM had kept the event "as low-key as possible" and that Ahmadinejad had also been restrained in his remarks. President Kocharian had remarked on Ahmadinejad's seeming frustration; the Iranian president was annoyed he "could not get his message out" to the international community. Ahmadinejad claimed himself willing to meet any condition the international community might set to reassure of Iran's benign intentions. Oskanian indicated there would be no near-term GOAM public statement reemphasizing Iran's UNSCR 1696/1737 obligations, though one may come later. END SUMMARY

[1](#)2. (C) TEENY LITTLE CEREMONY: Asserting his desire to be "fully transparent" and noting his conversation late March 20 with EUR DAS Mat Bryza, Oskanian agreed to meet with CDA for a private readout of the Iranian president's visit in connection with the pipeline ceremony. Oskanian suggested that the event did not really constitute a "visit" to Armenia by Ahmadinejad, as the event happened in a customs house right at the border. There had been no visit to the capital or even any kind of hospitality event at the border. The whole event was quite short, with the potent rainstorms driving everyone indoors promptly. The press conference afterward had been kept short (Ref A). Oskanian said Ahmadinejad made no attempt to portray the event as any kind of breakout of Iran's international isolation. Oskanian commented deprecatingly that Armenia is just a small neighbor, hardly a powerful voice in the international community that Iran might trumpet as a political ally.

[1](#)3. (C) KOCHARIAN-AHMADINEJAD TETE-A-TETE: Oskanian relayed the readout Kocharian had given him on the presidents' private meeting. This was Kocharian's second meeting with his Iranian counterpart, and Kocharian was struck by how passionately Ahmadinejad vented his frustration over his country's avowed inability to communicate its message to the international community. Ahmadinejad complained particularly about the French and Russian roles in the current debate. He understood American hostility, given our history, but had not expected Presidents Putin and Chirac to side with the U.S. The Iranian president said his country was willing to abide by any conditions that the international community might set to reassure that Iran was not producing an illicit program:

cameras, international inspectors, whatever was necessary. CDA pointed out that this dubious claim begged the question of why Iran had ordered the IAEA cameras, seals, and inspectors removed in the first place.

14. (C) NUCLEAR WEAPONS? CERTAINLY NOT!: Kocharian had relayed to Oskanian Ahmadinejad's impassioned insistence that Iran had no intention of developing nuclear weapons. The Iranian president insisted Iran was interested only in a peaceful nuclear program, and the associated knowledge and technology. Ahmadinejad had ruffed at some length about the futility of nuclear weapons: "What good had nuclear weapons done the USSR? It collapsed." He went on to note that Japan is the second largest world economy and a powerful international player, yet has no nuclear weapons, and Germany also was a leading world power without such weapons. Ahmadinejad rhetorically asked why the international community could not point out specifically how Iran was in violation of international law. "Don't just tell us you don't trust us. Where are our violations?" Ahmadinejad reportedly said, as though speaking to the international community through Kocharian. CDA interjected that our colleagues in Washington certainly could cite a lengthy catalog of Iranian violations, to which Oskanian hastily emphasized that he was not arguing on Iran's behalf, merely relaying what Ahmadinejad had said to Kocharian.

15. (C) NO GOOD TIME TO ANNOY THE NEIGHBOR: Oskanian said that he and Kocharian had discussed our earlier urging (Ref E instructions) that Armenia make a public statement calling on Iran to comply with UNSCRs 1696 and 1737. Oskanian said there had been no appropriate moment during Ahmadinejad's visit to make such a statement. Oskanian said that for now Armenia would stick by its non-paper (Ref C) as its reply to our demarche. He said "I do not think that a statement from us would help anything right now." Oskanian said the GOAM

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was willing to make some sort of statement along these lines in the future if a suitable opportunity arose which would make such a statement appropriate, perhaps when a new UNSCR is adopted. "I'm sure there will be many opportunities," he added, to do so in the course of upcoming events. Answering Oskanian's concerns that Washington may not sufficiently understand Armenia's difficult strategic position, CDA assured Oskanian that the embassy consistently reminds Washington of the unique challenges presented by Armenia's geography and closed borders, but that the issue of the Iranian nuclear program is so critical that it remained very important for Armenia publicly to affirm its support for the international community's position.

16. (C) COMMENT: This issue brings unusual pressure to bear on Oskanian's "complementarity" foreign policy model for Armenia--which amounts to trying to satisfy the national interests of Russia, America, Iran, and other powerful players in roughly equal measure. Armenia finds it exceedingly difficult to bring any sort of pressure to bear on Iran at the best of times. This is even more true at the moment that the Iranians have supplied, more or less gratis, an alternative source of natural gas supplies that Armenia desperately needs. Armenian leaders do not believe they can afford to affront their volatile southern neighbor right now, before their new pipeline is even operational. However, they also find it very uncomfortable to stand against what they know is a top foreign policy imperative of the United States. Thus, Oskanian is trying hard to convince us that this pipeline deal is just a petty parochial matter between neighbors, which passed almost unnoticed on the world stage, and that Armenia is just a tiny bystander in the great power battles over Iran's nuclear program. We do think that Kocharian and Oskanian responded to our demarche to the extent that they kept the pipeline inauguration proceedings to a bare minimum, and did everything they could to minimize media coverage. We remain disappointed, however, that we have not succeeded in wringing any kind of public statement

on Iran's UNSCR obligations from the GOAM, nor apparently did
Kocharian deliver any such messages privately to Ahmadinejad.
GODFREY